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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KABUL 002528

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [AF](#)

SUBJECT: IEC PLAYS IT SAFE IN PRELIMINARY ANNOUNCEMENT OF  
VOTES

Classified By: PolCouns Annie Pforzheimer for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

11. (SBU) Summary: The Independent Election Commission (IEC) announced the preliminary results August 25 of approximately 10 percent of all polling stations nationwide, results that appear to have been calculated to quell increasing tensions over alleged fraud and to defuse potentially dangerous rhetoric. The IEC defined the results as "preliminary, approved by the IEC, but subject to challenge in accordance with the law prior to final certification." The IEC announced results showing Karzai with 212,927 and Abdullah with 202,889 of the total 524,444 valid votes counted thus far, although the numbers were off in a written document accompanying the conference. Coming in third was Hazara populist Bashardost, with 53,740 votes, and Ghani trailing with 15,143 of the valid votes. The numbers given do not represent a cross-section of the country or any statistical weighting of votes from each province. Candidates who are not satisfied with these results may contest them within the next 72 hours. There were no controversial questions from the assembled crowd of mostly foreigners, though there were challenges from candidate agents, whom Dr. Daoud Ali Najafi, Chief Electoral Officer of the IEC, simply referred to the Electoral Complaints Commission (ECC). End Summary.

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IEC Plays It Safe  
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12. (SBU) The IEC announced results in a well-attended press conference showing Karzai with 212,927 and Abdullah with 202,889 of the total 524,444 valid votes counted thus far, although the numbers were off in a written document accompanying the conference. However, an IEC document distributed at the press conference showed Karzai with 219,539 and Abdullah with 205,515 of 524,444 valid votes. Hazara populist Bashardost was third with 53,740 followed by Ashraf Ghani with 15,143 and Mirwais Yaseni at 4,375. A reporter asked Chief Electoral Officer Daoud Ali Najafi about the discrepancy between his speech and the numbers on the paper, but Najafi offered no real explanation. Najafi just re-read the results, repeating the inconsistencies.

13. (C) The numbers given in no way represent a cross-section of the country or any statistical weighting of votes from each province. Depending on whether one goes by Dr. Najafi's announcement or the IEC handout, no votes have yet been counted from Khost, Kunarha, Laghman, Nuristan, Badakhshan, Baghlan, Balkh, Sar-e-Pul, Badghis, Nimroz, Helmand, Zabul, Uruzgan, and Herat. The handout and the speech were inconsistent regarding counting from Herat and Uruzgan. (Comment: It is likely that votes from all or at least some of these "no-count" provinces have in fact been counted, but were not supposed to be included in today's presentation because of controversy surrounding some of their polling centers; or else because there was a desire to present only those results that would put Karzai and Abdullah in close competition to prevent an escalation of rhetoric on the part of either of their supporters. They can only manipulate the release of data for another few days, if that long. End

Comment.)

14. (SBU) On the spreadsheet, Karzai posts a lead in Kabul, Wardak, Paktika, Paktia, Nangahar, Jowzjan, Faryab, Herat, Farah, Kandahar, Zabul, and Bamiyan. Abdullah posts a lead in Kapisa, Parwan, Takhar, Kunduz, Samangan, Ghor, and Panjshir. Bashardost is leading in Ghazni and Daikondi and has a strong third place in Bamiyan.

15. (SBU) According to the spreadsheet, 9.92 percent of the vote has been counted in Kabul.  
-- In RC-East 38.08 percent of the vote has been counted in Kapisa, 56.34 percent in Parwan, 23.64 percent in Wardak, 14.23 percent in Logar, 5.96 percent in Ghazni, 0.19 percent in Paktika, 5.85 percent in Paktia, 28.88 percent in Bamiyan, 14.94 percent in Nangarhar and none in Khost, Laghman, or Kunar.  
-- In RC-South 16.46 percent of the vote has been counted in Daikondi, 1.86 percent in Kandahar, 0.99 percent in Zabul, and none in Helmand, Nimroz, or Uruzgan.  
-- In RC-North 0.94 percent of the vote has been counted in Takhar, 38.99 percent in Kunduz, 49.24 percent in Jowzjan, 8.69 percent in Faryab, and none in Badakhshan, Baghlan, Balkh, Samangan, or Sar-e-Pul.  
-- In RC-West, the spreadsheet lists 18.19 percent of the vote counted from Ghor, 9.35 percent in Farah, 0.52 percent in Herat, and none from Badghis.

16. (C) It is our understanding that these percentages reflect only the non-fraudulent ballots. When explaining what the numbers mean, the IEC showed a breakdown between "valid votes", "invalid votes", and "invalidated votes". They

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defined "invalid votes" (21,170) as those which were not marked clearly or where more than one presidential candidate was marked. "Invalidated votes" (10,228) were defined as those votes cast for candidates that were officially withdrawn from the election after the ballots were printed. There was no mention of any votes that could be controversial or fraudulent. Candidates who are not satisfied with these results may contest them within the next 72 hours. There were no controversial questions from the assembled crowd of mostly foreigners, though there was a challenge from a candidate agent, whom Dr. Najafi of the IEC simply referred to the Electoral Complaints Commission (ECC).

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Press Guidance  
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17. (U) Press Guidance/Talking Points on the IEC,s Initial Release of Polling Results

1Q. Have you seen the results released today from the IEC?

1A. Yes. We've seen the IEC partial preliminary results released today, representing 2697 polling stations in 18 provinces, accounting for approximately 10 percent of all polling stations. Today,s announcement was the beginning of a lengthy process. We will need to be patient, allow the IEC and ECC to do their jobs thoroughly and wait for all the results to be released. We call on all parties to refrain from speculation until national results are announced.

1Q. When will the results be final?

1A. As the IEC said on August 23, we expect that the final results will be available around September 17-23 and only the IEC can certify results. We call on all candidates and their supporters to behave responsibly.

1Q. Does the U.S. have confidence in the IEC?

1A. Yes. We have confidence in the IEC and ECC, which although independent of one another, are linked in the

process of tallying votes, adjudicating complaints, and verifying results.

Q. Is this process of releasing a tranche of the results over a period of days transparent?

A. Yes. The timing of the releases is due to the immense logistical and procedural challenges of the election. We note the IEC also has an observer area in the tallying center for candidate agents, international observers and diplomats.

Q. Has anyone from the U.S. Embassy been observing the tallying process?

A. Yes. Embassy personnel have been regularly observing the tallying process.  
EIKENBERRY